



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
01376 520627
witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 27th May 2025**

Place: **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE**

Present: Councillors J.C. Coleman (Chairman)
L. Headley
R. Playle
J. Robertson
E. Williams

Also in attendance: Cllr B Fleet
T. Townsend (Witham Hub)
N. Smith (Town Clerk)
G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Barlow, Heath, Martin and Ramage; and Councillor Playle explained that he would need to leave early as he had another Meeting to attend.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 18th February 2025 be confirmed as a true record and sung by the Chairman.

3. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

4. **QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There was no member of the press or public present.

5. GUEST SPEAKER

The Chairman welcomed Tina Townsend from the Witham Hub to the Meeting.

Tina spoke about the Hub's achievements in the past year. She said that they had continued to thrive in the Grove. They were proud to have received four awards last year for their work to encourage social inclusion and four this year for the best community centre. Three young people had received High Sheriff awards, two for 'tea and tech', teaching those in need of help using mobile devices and the internet and they also go into Park View care home to assist. She was very proud that young people from the Hub had received the Mayor's Environmental Award for their crisp packet initiative and they also undertake litter picks. The Hub was now formally affiliated with the Royal British Legion following the setting up of a Veteran's Coffee Morning in October with veterans coming from a distance to enjoy a breakfast roll. She spoke of the importance of preventing social isolation.

Tina then spoke about their new venture on the recent opening of a Braintree Hub, with a 'pay it forward' scheme and partnership with a mental health support charity, Peabody and Churches in the Foyer. She said that their events were popular particularly the Dementia Day last Saturday. They support 'Time for Tea' for those with dementia which had no agenda so can be a fun session or tearful. They were working with the Town Council and United Reformed Church to make Witham a dementia friendly town. She said that as well as working with Essex Police, she worked with the Fire Brigade and now fits smoke alarms.

Tina explained that she had submitted a grant application again this year to support the work they do in completing forms. She said that since the 1st April, 48 individuals had sought help from just one of their advisors, 40 of those referred to the CA in some capacity but had then come to The Hub. She considered that it would not have been appropriate to investigate the circumstances. Most forms are for renewal of disabled badges, PIP or universal credit. She said one occasion was to assist a resident seeking citizenship. She said that they just help by deciphering forms for those who struggle but do not give advice. She explained that they are insured to carry out their work.

Members congratulated Tina and the Hub for their success particularly their work with veterans.

The Chairman thanked Tina for her comprehensive report.

6. ESSEX POLICE

The Town Clerk explained that Community Sergeant Jesse had been unable to attend but his report had been circulated.

7. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk explained the next event would be United in Music on Saturday, 14th June 2025 on the River Walk. She hoped Members would be able to attend. She said that the Dementia Day had been fantastic and the simulator had been hired by the Hub which was impactful. She thanked everyone who had attended to help.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

Councillor Playle then left the Meeting.

8. COMMUNITY COMMITTEE INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 31st March 2025 was received.

RESOLVED That the Income and Expenditure report be received and information noted.

9. GRANT APPLICATIONS

(a) Witham Guides

A grant aid request was received.

It was explained that a grant of £3,000 had been requested so that 33 guides and their five leaders could take a trip to a PGL camp in Paris. The total cost of the project was £16,500 and it was proposed to use the money to give a reduced cost to certain guides whose families suffer financial hardship.

Members understood the value of the Girl Guiding movement but thought £3,000 was an arbitrary figure as there were no details as to how many girls would actually be fully subsidised. It was also noted that the guides had already been given a £500 Member's grant for a leader to attend.

Members considered that a compromise was required as measureable commensurate benefit needed to be demonstrated.

RESOLVED That a sum of £500 be awarded to the Girl Guides towards the cost of a leader's trip to Paris.

(b) Kinetix Academy

A grant aid request was received from Kinetix Academy CIC requesting a grant of £1,095 towards a total project cost of £1,460. This would enable 12 young people with behavioural issues to attend six weekly sessions. It was considered that this would impact on the wider community.

Members considered the commensurate benefit to be gained and the need for the Town Council to be smart with its limited budget.

RESOLVED That the grant application from Kinetix Academy be refused.

It was agreed to consider the grant application from Citizens Advice next.

(c) Citizens Advice

A grant aid request for £10,000 was received from Citizens Advice for funding its debt advice service.

The CA had now merged with South Essex and Members recognised the challenges this had raised but that other avenues of funding would now be open to them. It was explained that the Town Council had supported the CA for a number of years but there had been a decline in service as it was now referring people to the Hub for assistance.

Members agreed that it would be appropriate to give the CA £5,000 and ask for full statistics so its performance could be compared with other organisations.

RESOLVED That a grant of £5,000 be given to the CA towards its debt advice service and full statistics be requested so a comparison of its performance against other organisations could be undertaken.

(d) **The Witham Hub**

A grant application was received from The Witham Hub. Members understood that the bank statements had still to be received so that any grant made would be subject to satisfactory documents.

The grant application was for £10,000 to help combat social isolation and to assist in filling out forms. It was suggested that the Hub should record data in the same way as CA so a comparison could be made and grants made on statistics.

Members then spoke about the available budget and the best way to support the Hub and its valuable work.

Whilst it was suggested that the full £10,000 could be granted, Mrs Townsend said that she would be happy to receive £5,000 at the moment and the matter given further consideration in six months' time so as not to preclude other charities being assisted.

RESOLVED That, subject to satisfactory bank statements being received, the Hub be given a grant of £5,000 and a new grant application be made in November once remaining funding was known.

10. EVENTS UPDATE

The Town Clerk explained that the Dog Show had been a success and the VE celebrations well attended. Members spoke about the fantastic VE events at the Royal British Legion Hall which was financed by the Town Council.

The Chairman said that VJ Day would be about the forgotten forces and celebrated in a different way working in partnership with other organisations. Asian food stalls would be at the RAFA club on Friday, 15th August 2025 and the RBL would also be marking the occasion.

RESOLVED That the update be received and noted.

11. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media statistics were received.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

13. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report from the Information Centre Manager was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.37 p.m.

Councillor J.C. Coleman
Chairman
NS/GK/30.5.2025